# The MARSHAL

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### The Finest Things.

Endurance, Francois' own negro boy, brought a note to Roanoke house on a morning five days after. It read:

"My Dear Miss Hampton:

"The doctor has given me permission to ride tomorrow and I wish to ride to Roanoke house before all other places. Will mademoiselle see me? Will mademoiselle permit me to see her for a short time alone? I await anxiously a word from you, and I am your servant,

"FRANCOIS BEAUPRE."

Mademoiselle sent a fair sheet of paper with a few unsteady scratches across it, and sat down to live over it was accomplished. The colonel had ridden to Norfolk for the day—had Francois known of that, one wonders? Lucy, waiting in that small stately study with the dim portraits and the wide vague view across the fields of the James river, heard the gay hoof beats of Aquarelle pound down the gravel under the window, heard Francois' deep gentle voice as he gave the horse to Sambo, and waited one minute more, the hardest minute of all. Then the door had opened and he stood there—the miracle, as it seems at such moments to a woman, possibly to a man—of all the gifts and qualities worth loving.

He had made his precise bow, and she had heard his voice saying gently: "Good morning, mademoiselle," and the door was closed; and they were alone together. In a flash she felt that it could not be endured, that she must escape. She rose hastily.

"I'm sorry I must go; I cannot stay—"

But Francois had laughed and taken her hand and was holding it with a tender force which thrilled her. He understood. She knew he understood the shame and fear of a woman who has given love unasked; she was safe in his hands; she knew that. With a sigh she let her fingers rest in his and sat down again and waited.

"Dear Mademoiselle Lucy," said the deep kind voice, "my first friend in Virginia, my comrade, my little scholar—"

Why did Lucy grow cold and quiet at these words of gentleness? Francois was sitting beside her, holding her hand in both his, gazing at her with the clearest affection in his look. Yet she braced herself against she did not know what. The voice went on with its winning foreign inflections, its slip of English now and then, and its never-to-be-described power of reaching the heart.

"See, mademoiselle," said Francois, "we are too real friends, you and I, to have deception between us. We will not pretend, you and I, to each other—is it not, mademoiselle? Therefore I shall not try to hide from you that I heard that day those words so wonderful which you spoke to me so unworthy. I have thought of those words ever since, mademoiselle, as I lay ill with this troublesome arm; ever since—all the time. My heart has been full of a—gratification to you which cannot be told. I shall remember all my life; I shall be honored as no king could honor me, by those words. And because you have so touched me, and have so laid that little hand on the

He Bent Over Her Hand.

heart of me, I am going to tell you, my dear comrade and scholar, what is most secret and most sacred to me."

In as few words as might be, he told her of the peasant child who had been lifted out of his poverty-bound life with such large kindliness that no bond which held him to that poor, yet dear life had been broken; who had been left all the love of his first home and yet been given a home and a training and an education which set him ready for any career; he told of the big-souled, blunt, Napoleonic officer, the seigneur; of the gray, red-roofed castle, with its four round towers; of handsome silent Pietro, and of the unfailing long kindness of them all. Then, his voice lowered, holding the girl's hand still, he told her of Alixe, of the fairy child who had met him on that day of his first visit and had brought him to her father, the seigneur. He described a little the playmate of his childhood, fearless, boyish in her intrepid courage, yet always exquisitely a girl. He told of the long summer vacations of the three as they grew up, and the rides in the Jura valley, and of that last ride when he knew that he was to go to Italy next morning, and of how he had faced the seigneur and told him that he loved his daughter and had given her up then, instantly, for loyalty to him and to Pietro. And then he told her of the peasant boy in Riders' Hollow in the gray morning light after the night of his escape—and how, by hand on the bridle and seat in the saddle, and at last by the long curl of the black lashes he had known the peasant boy for Alixe.

Lucy Hampton, listening, was so thrilled with this romance of a life-long love that she could silence her aching heart and her aching pride and could be—with a painful sick effort—but yet could be, utterly generous. There is no midway in a case between entire selfishness and entire selflessness. The young southern girl, wounded, shamed, cruelly hurt in vanity and in love, was able to choose the larger way, and taking it, felt that sharp joy of renunciation which is as keen and difficult to breathe and as sweet in the breathing as the air of a mountain-top. Trembling, she put her other little hand on Francois' hands.

"I see," she said, and her voice shook and she smiled mistily, but very kindly. "You could not love anyone but that beautiful Alixe. I—I would not have you."

And Francois bent hastily, with tears in his eyes, and kissed the warm little hands. The uncertain sliding voice went on:

"I am not—ashamed—that I said that—to you. I would not have said it—not for worlds. I—thought you were killed. I—didn't know what I said. But I am not ashamed. I am glad that I—am enough of a person to have known—the finest things—and"—her voice sank and she whispered the next words over the dark head bent on her hands—"and to have loved them. But don't bother. I shall—get over it."

The liquid tones choked a bit on that and Francois lifted his head quickly and his eyes flamed at her. "Of course you will, my dear little girl, my brave mademoiselle. It is not as you think; it is not serious, mon amie. It is only that your soul is full of kindness and enthusiasm and eagerness to stand by the unlucky. I am alone and expatriated; I have had a little of misfortune and you are sorry for me. It is that. Ah, I know. I am very old and wise, me. It would never do," he went on. "The noblesse of Virginia would rise in a revolution if it should be that the princess of Roanoke house gave her heart to a French peasant. I am come to be a man of knowledge—" And he shook his head with as worldly-wise an expression as if one of Guido Reni's dark angels should talk politics. He went on again, smiling a little, an air of daring in his manner. "Moreover, Mademoiselle Miss Lucy, there is a fairy prince who awaits only the smallest sign from you."

Lucy smiled. "No," she said. And then, "A fairy prince—in Virginia?"

"Ah, yes, Mademoiselle Miss Lucy. Of the true noblesse, that one. A fine, big, handsome prince, the right sort."

"Who?" demanded Lucy, smiling still.

"Of such a right sort indeed that it is no matter—ah, no, but perhaps just the thing to make one love him more, that he is lame."

"Harry!" Lucy's smile faded.

"But yes, indeed, mon amie," and Francois patted the little hand with his big one. "Henry, indeed. Henry, who is waiting to kill me for love of you; Henry, the best truest fellow, the manliest bravest fellow. Who rides like Henry? Who has read all the books in all the libraries like Henry? Who is respected by the old men, the great men, for his knowledge and his thinking and his statecraft almost—like Henry? Who has such a great heart and brain and such fearless courage as Henry?"

"You are very loyal to your friends," Lucy said, half pleased, half stabbed to the soul.

"Certainly. What for is gratification worth, otherwise?" Francois threw at her earnestly. There were a few English words too much for him still; "gratitude" seemed to be one. He stood up and his great eyes glowed down at her. "Mademoiselle," he said, "two women of earth, my mother and Alixe, are for me the Madonnas, the crown of women," and his glance lifted to the ceiling as if to heaven, without pose, unconscious—a look no American could ever have worn. "And, voila, mademoiselle, my little scholar will always stand next to and close to them." He bent over her hand and his lips touched it long and tenderly. "Is it right between us, mon amie? Are we friends always? It is indeed so for life with me."

And little Lucy felt a healing peace settling on her bruised feelings and heard herself saying generous words of friendship which healed also as she spoke them.

Then, "I must find that savage boy Henry, and beseech him to spare my life," spoke Francois at last. "My life is of more value today, that it possesses a sure friend in Mademoiselle Lucy," he said and smiled radiantly. And was gone.

"He said—that Harry loved me! What nonsense!" Lucy whispered to herself. And the broken-hearted one was smiling.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### Once More at Home.

In fewer words, with less told, Francois' straightforwardness metamorphosed the angry lad Harry Hampton into a follower more devoted than he had been even in the first flush of enthusiasm for his rescued prisoner. Again the boy dogged his footsteps and adored him frankly. And Francois, enchanted to be friends again with his friend, wondered at the goodness and generosity of the people of this world. It is roughly true that one finds life in general like a mirror; that if one looks into it with a smile and a cordial hand held out one meets smiles and outstretched hands in return. Through all his days it had happened so with this child of a French village.

So that when the day came at last when he stood once more on the deck of the Lovely Lucy, loaded with her cargo of tobacco for foreign ports, Francois felt as if he were leaving home and family. The long green carpet of the rolling lawn of Roanoke was crowded with people come to tell him good-by. All of his soldier boys were there, the lads trained by him, one and all ready to swear by him or to die for him. Lucy and Harry stood together, and the servants were gathered to do him honor, and people had ridden from all over the county for the farewell. His eyes dimmed with tears of gratefulness, he watched them as the gangplank was drawn up and the sails caught the wind and the ship swung slowly out into the stream.

"Come back again—come back again," they called from the shore.

Francois heard the deep tones of the lads and the rich voices of the negroes and he knew that some there could not speak, even as he could not. So he waved his hat silently, and the ship moved faster and the faces on the lawn seemed smaller farther away, and yet he heard those following voices calling to him, more faintly:

"Come back again—oh, come back again!"

And with that the negroes had broken into a melody, and the ship moved on to the wild sweet music. Way Down Upon de S'wanee Ribber, the negroes sang, and the ship was at the turn of the river. The stately walls of Roanoke house, the green slope crowded with figures of his friends, the sparkling water front—the current had swept away all of the picture and he could only hear that wailing music of the negroes' voices, lower, more fitful; and now it was gone. He had left Virginia; he was on his way to friends. And for all his joy of going, he was heavy-hearted for the leaving.

The weeks went slowly at sea, but after a while he had landed, was in France, was at Vicques. He had seen his mother, with her hair whitened by those years of his prison life—a happy woman now, full of business and responsibility, yet always with a rapt look in her face as of one who lived in a deep inner quiet. He had talked long talks with his prosperous father and slipped into his old place among his brothers and sisters, utterly refusing to be made a stranger or a great man. And over and over again he had told the story of his capture and the story of his escape.

At the castle the returned wanderer picked up no less the thread dropped so suddenly seven years before. The general, to whom the boy seemed his boy risen from the dead, would hardly let him from his sight; Alixe kept him in a tingling atmosphere of tenderness and mockery and sisterly devotion, which thrilled him and chilled him and made him blissful and wretched in turns. The puzzle of Alixe was more unreadable than the puzzle of the sphinx to the three men who loved her, to her father and Francois and Pietro. The general and Francois spoke of it guardedly, in few words, once in a long time, but Pietro never spoke. Pietro was there often, yet more often away in London, where the exiled Mazzini, at the head of one wing of Italian patriots, lived and conspired. And other men appeared suddenly and disappeared at the chateau, and held conferences with the general and Francois in that large dim library where the little peasant boy had sat with his thin ankles twisted about the legs of his high chair, and copied the history of Napoleon. These men paid great attention nowadays to the words of that peasant boy.

"As soon as you are a little stronger," they said, "there is much work for you to do," and the general would come in at that point with a growl like distant thunder.

"He is to rest," the general would order. "He is to rest till he is well. He has done enough; let the boy alone, you others."

But the time came, six months after his return, when Francois must be sent to visit the officers of certain regiments thought to be secretly Bonapartist; when he, it was believed, could get into touch with them and tell them enough and not too much of the plans of the party, and find out where they stood and how much one might count on them. So, against the general's wish, Francois went off on a political mission. It proved more complicated than had seemed probable; he was gone a long time; he had to travel and endure exhausting experiences for which he was not yet fit. So that when he came home to Vicques, two months later, he was white and transparent and ill. And there were some of the mysterious men at the chateau to meet him, delighted, pitiless. Delighted with the work he had done, with his daring and finesse and success, without pity for his weakness, begging him to go at once on another mission. The general was firm as to that; his boy should not be hounded; he should stay at home in the quiet old chateau and get well. But the boy was restless; a fever of enthusiasm was on him and he wanted to do more and yet more for the prince's work.

At this point two things happened: Pietro came from London, and Francois, on the point of leaving for another secret errand, broke down and was ill. He lay in his bed in his room at the farmhouse, the low upper chamber looking out—through wide-open casement windows, their old leaded little panes of glass glittering from every uneven angle—looking out at broad fields and bouquets of chestnut trees, and far off, five miles away, at the high red roofs of the chauteau of Vicques. And gazing so, he saw Pietro on old Capitaine, turn from the shady avenue of the chestnuts and ride slowly to the house. With that he heard his mother greeting Pietro below in the great kitchen, then the two voices—the deep one and the soft one—talking, talking, a long time. What could his mother and Pietro have to talk about so long? And then Pietro's step was coming up the narrow stair, and he was there, in the room.

"Francois," Pietro began in his direct fashion, "I think you must go back to Virginia."

Francois regarded him with startled eyes, saying nothing. There was a chill and an ache in his heart at the thought of yet another parting.

Pietro went out. "I have a letter from Harry Hampton. The place needs you; the people want you; and Harry

His Voice Was Full of Passion and Pleading.

and Miss Hampton say they will not be married unless you come to be best man at the wedding." Francois smiled. Pietro went on again. "Moreover, boy, Francois—you are not doing well here. You are too useful; they want to use you constantly and you are ready; but you are not fit. You must get away for another year or two. Then you will be well and perhaps by then the prince will have real work for you. And you must have strength for that time. Your mother says I am right." With that his mother stood in the doorway, regarding him with her calm eyes, and nodded to Pietro's words. So it came about that Francois went back shortly to Virginia.

On the day before he went he sat in the garden of the chateau with Alixe, on the stone seat by the sun-dial where they had sat years before when the general had seen him kiss the girl's hand, in that unbrotherly way which had so surprised him.

"Alixe," said Francois, "I am going to the end of the world."

"Not for the first time," Alixe answered cheerfully.

"Perhaps for the last," Francois threw back dramatically. It is hard to have one's best-beloved discount one's tragedies. And Alixe laughed and lifted a long stem of a spring flower which she held in her hand, and brushed his forehead delicately with the distant tip of it.

"Smooth out the wrinkles, do not frown; do not look solemn; you always come back, Monsieur the Bad Penny; you will this time. Do not be melodramatic, Francois."

Francois, listening to these sane sentiments, was hurt, and not at all inspired with cheerfulness. "Alixe," he said—and knew that he should not say it—"there is something I have wanted all my life—all my life."

"Is there?" inquired Alixe in commonplace tones. "A horse, per exemple?" He caught her hand, disregarding her tone; his voice was full of passion and pleading. "Do not be heartless and cold today, Alixe, dear Alixe. I am going so far, and my very soul is torn with leaving you—all."

It takes no more than a syllable, an inflection at times, to turn the course of a life. If Francois had left his sentence alone before that last little word; if he had told the girl that his soul was torn with leaving her, then it is hard to say what might have happened. But—"you all"—he did not wish then to have her think that it meant more to leave her than to leave the others. Alixe readjusted the guard which had almost slipped from her, and stood again defensive.

"I won't be cruel, Francois; you know how we—all—are broken-hearted to have you go."

Francois caught that fatal little word "all," repeated, and dimly sow its significance, and his own responsibility. Alixe went on.

"I wonder if I do not know—what it is—that you have wanted all your life?"

Eagerly Francois caught at her words. "May I tell you Alixe, Alixe?"

"No." Alixe spoke quickly. "No, let me guess. It is—it is"—and Francois, catching his breath, tried to take the word from her, but she stopped him. "No, I must—tell it. You have wished—all your life"—Alixe was breathing rather fast—"that—I should care for—Pietro."

A cold chill at hearing that thing said in that voice seized him. Very still his eyes down, he did not speak.

"Is—is that it?"

There is an angel of perversity who possesses our souls at times. He makes us say the unkind thing when we wish not to; he tangles our feet so that we fall and trip and hurt ourselves and our dearest—and behold long after we know that all the same it was an angel; that without that trouble we should have gone forever down the easy wrong way. We know that the perverse angel was sent to warn us off the pleasant grass which was none of ours, and by making things disagreeable at the psychological moment, save our souls alive for right things to come. Some such crosswise heavenly messenger gripped the mind of Alixe, and she said what she hated herself for saying, and saw the quick result in the downcast misery of poor Francois' face. And then the same cruel, wise angel turned his attention to Francois. "If she thinks that, let her," whispered the perverse one. "Let it go at that; say yes."

And Francois lifted mournful eyes and repeated, "That you should love Pietro—yes—that is what I have wished for all my life.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### Summoned.

On the morning of May 9, 1840, the sun shone gaily in London. It filtered in intricate patterns through the curtains which shaded the upper windows of a house in Carlton gardens, and the breeze lifted the lace, and sunlight and breeze together touched the bent head of a young man who sat at a writing-table. A lock of hair had escaped on his forehead and the air touched it, lifted it, as if to say: "Behold the Napoleonic curl! See how he is like his uncle!"

But the pen ran busily, regardless of the garrulous breeze; there was much to do for a hard-working prince who found time to be the hero of ballrooms, the center of a London season, and yet could manipulate his agents throughout the garrisons of France, and plan and execute a revolution. It was the year when the body of Napoleon the First was brought from St. Helena to Paris, and Louis Bonaparte had resolved, in that steady mind which never lost its grip on the reason of being of his existence, that with the ashes of the emperor his family should come back to France. For months the network had been spread, was tightening, and now the memory which held its friendships securely always, took thought of a Frenchman living in Virginia. As soon as his letter was finished to his father—the pen flew across the lines:

"The sword of Austerlitz must not be in an enemy's hands," he wrote to his father. "It must stay where it may again be lifted in the day of danger for the glory of France." His letters were apt to be slightly oratorical; it was moreover the fashion of the day to write so.

He raised his head and stared into the street. It was enough to decide his expedition for this summer that General Bertrand, well-meaning, and ill-judging, had given to Louis Philippe the arms of the emperor, to be placed in the Invalides. Every member of the Bonaparte family was aroused, and to the heir it was a trumpet call. He could hardly wait to go to France, to reclaim that insulted sword. He wrote on, finished the letter to the exiled king, his father, a gloomy and lonely old man whom the son did not forget through years spent away from him.

Then he drew out a fresh sheet of paper, and his faint smile gleamed; for the thought of this adherent in Virginia was pleasant to him.

"Chevalier Francois Beaupre," he headed the letter, and began below, "My friend and Marshal of Some Day." He considered a moment and wrote quickly as if the words boiled to the pen. "The baton awaits you. Come. I make an expedition within three months, and I need you and your faith in me. Our stars must shine together to give full light. So, mon ami, join me here at the earliest, that the emperor's words may come true.

"LOUIS BONAPARTE."

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Across the water, in Virginia, two years had made few changes. On the

"You Have News—What Is It?" the Girl Cried.

June day when the prince's letter lay in the post office of Norfolk the last of the roses were showing pink and red over the gardens in a sudden breeze. The leaves of the trees that arched the road that led to Roanoke house were sappy green, just lately fully spread, and glorious with freshness. Their shadows, dancing on the white pike, were sharp cut against the brightness. And through the light-pierced cave of shade a man traveled on horseback from one plantation to another, a man who rode as a Virginian rides, yet with a military air for all that. He patted the beast's neck with a soothing word, and smiled as Aquarelle plunged at the waving of a bough, at a fox that ran across the road. But if an observer had been there he might have seen that the man's thought was not with horse or journey. Francois Beaupre, riding out to give a French lesson to Miss Hampton at Roanoke house, as he had been doing for four years, all unconscious as he was of the letter awaiting for him at the moment in Norfolk, was thinking of the event to come to which that letter called him.

"Lucy! Oh, Lucy!" A voice called from the lawn, and in a moment more the colonel was upon them. "Lucy," he began, "somebody must arrange about the new harnesses; my time is,

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